

Conflicts and Forced Migration: Reflections and Recommendations

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Abstract

Forced migration has become a challenge of our time. Since the end of the Cold War, an increasing number of people has been forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, and systematic violations of human rights. Africa in particular has seen a lot of its people displaced both internally and externally. Therefore, there is need to reflect on the causes and impact of forced migration. This essay seeks to reflect on the connection between conflict and forced migration particularly in Africa. The essay also suggests strategies for preventing further displacements.

1.0 Introduction



(Africa report on internal displacement, December 2017 p16)

Since the end of the Cold War, increasing numbers of people have been forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, and systematic violations of human rights. This presentation analyses the causes and consequences of conflicts and forced migration, including its devastating impact both within and beyond the borders of affected countries. It suggests strategies for preventing displacement, a special legal framework tailored to the needs of the displaced, more effective institutional arrangements at the national, regional, and international levels, and increased capacities to address the protection, human rights, and development needs of the displaced.

The Internally Displaced Monitoring Centre's (IDMC, 2017) Quarterly Update in Africa highlights the severity of the continent's continuing displacement crisis through conflicts. There were at least 12.6 million forced migrants in 2016, and 3.9 million new displacements were recorded during the same year. At least 37 of Africa's 55 countries across every region have been affected. The Kampala Convention calls for a new approach to displacement that addresses its causes and longer-term implications, as well as its more immediate humanitarian consequences. Conflict caused 70 per cent of Africa's new displacements in 2016. The continent also accounted for 40 per cent of conflict displacement globally, more than any other, and the scale and relentless nature of the phenomenon are beyond the scope of humanitarian action.

2.0 Defining forced migration

According to South (2007) one can broadly define three types of forced migration according to the causes of population movement: **Type 1**: Armed conflict-induced displacement: this is either as a direct consequence of fighting and counter-insurgency operations, or because armed conflict has directly undermined human and food security, and is linked to severe human rights abuses.

Type 2: Military occupation- and development-induced displacement: this is generally caused by a) confiscation of land – following armed conflict – by the army or other armed groups, including natural resource extraction and infrastructure construction, and b) forced labour and other abuses.

Both of the above two types of displacement are products of conflict. **Type 1** is directly caused by armed conflict; **Type 2** is caused by latent conflict or by the threat of use of force. As such, they constitute forced migration, and cause internal displacement.

Berger (1987), Adepoju (1989), Bolzman (1996), and Anthony (1999), refer to forced migrations as those caused by social and political problems such as armed conflicts, human rights violations, natural disasters, etc. In these cases, forced migrants, commonly referred to as refugees, flee their places of residence for their physical security and to protect themselves from an imminent threat to their physical well-being. Nick Van Hear (1998) talks of voluntary as opposed to involuntary nature of the forces that lead to migration. Anthony Richmond (1994) distinguishes between 'proactive' and 'reactive' migration. He classifies migrants in two main categories of those with agency (choice) and those without agency, forced migrants being those with little or no agency.

3.0 Summary and key messages on conflicts and forced migration in Africa

Forced migration is a persistent and serious problem in Africa, despite strong commitments on the part of national governments to prevent, address and resolve it. More than 3.9 million new displacements were recorded in 2016 as a result of conflict and violence, leaving 12.6 million people living in displacement inside their own countries as at the end of the year (see **Figure 1**). Behind the figures are the blighted lives of millions of women, men, girls and boys who have fled their homes to escape atrocities, and who face the risk of long-term displacement and deprivation (see **Figure 2**). These numbers show people being forced to leave their homes, often at a moment's notice and in the most traumatic of circumstances, and who receive little protection and assistance from their governments. In countries with low coping capacity and

weak governance, the majority of internally displaced people (IDPs) are extremely vulnerable and often at risk of further upheaval and long-term impoverishment.

Figure 1: Number of people displaced by conflict and violence in Africa in 2016.

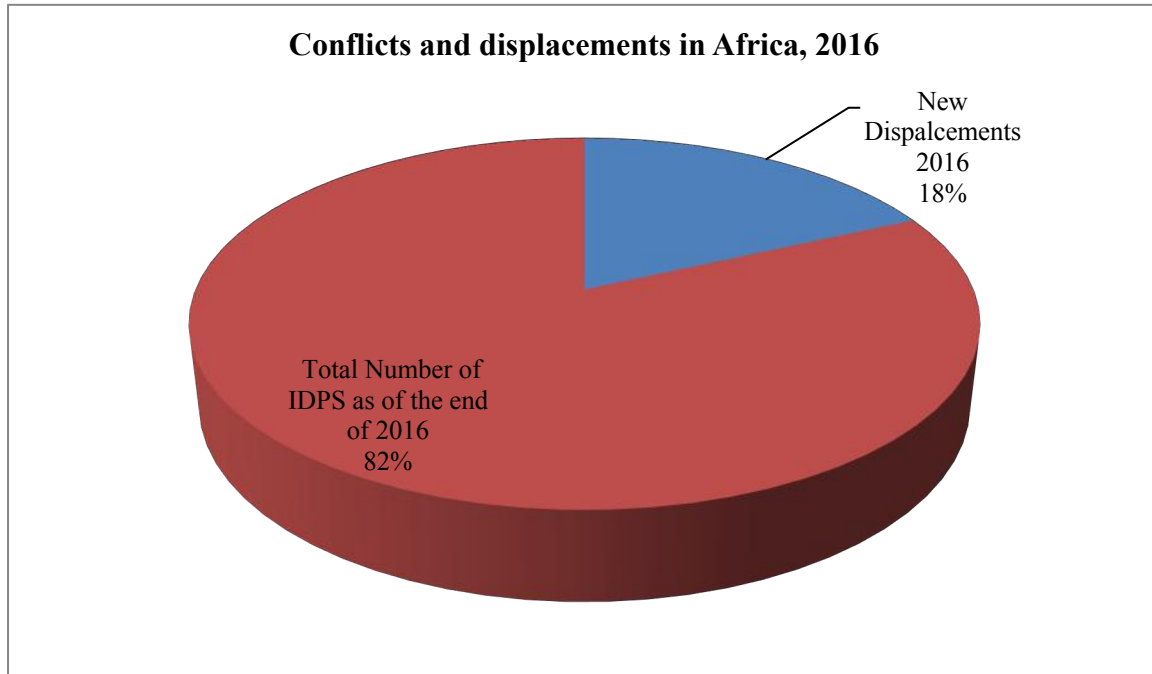


Figure 2: Girls and boys who have fled their homes to escape conflicts in Africa



(Africa report on internal displacement, December 2017 p45)

As the world focuses its attention on preventing irregular migration and protecting refugees fleeing Africa, forced migrations persists at an alarming rate but the plight of those affected goes largely unnoticed. Forced (or involuntary) migration includes a number of legal or

political categories. All involve people who have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere.

Forced migration is a result of and will impact on a range of social, political and economic processes that determine the well-being of individuals and communities, and the prosperity of nations. Local and national development actors need to lead the planning, implementation and monitoring of assistance to displaced populations, ensuring that emergency response is integrated into long-term support that creates opportunities and helps ensure sustainable solutions. Forced migrants face specific and often extreme vulnerabilities that short-term humanitarian measures alone are unable to address.

4.0 Conflict and forced migration: A persistent phenomenon in Africa

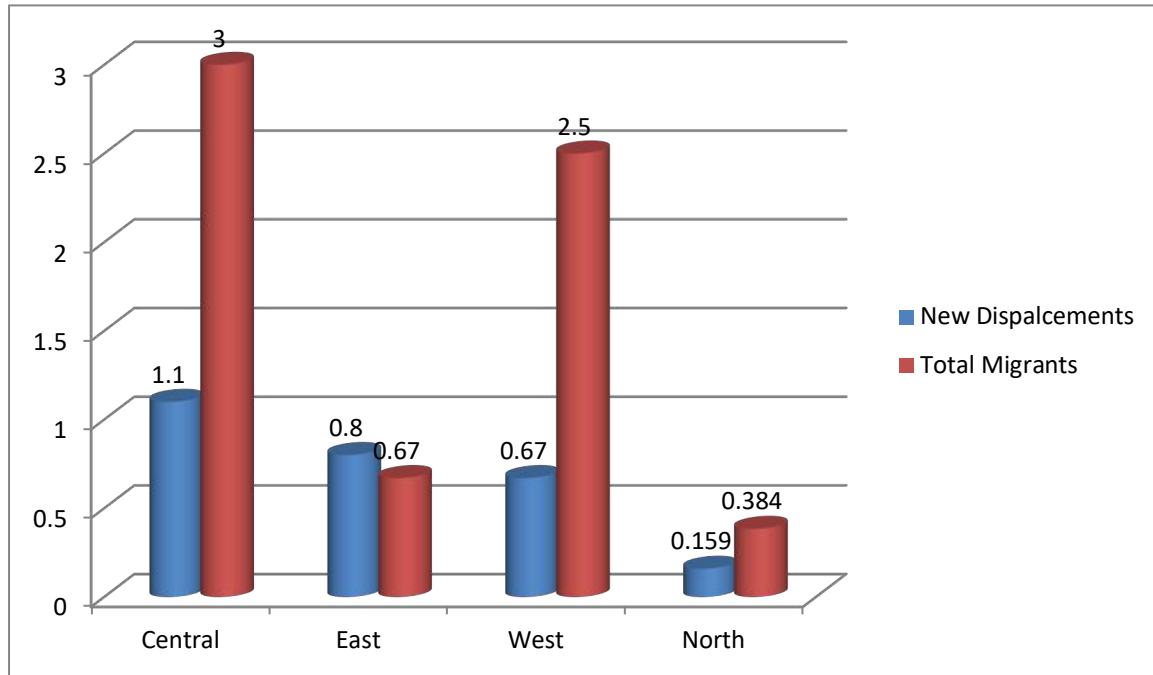
There were 12.6 million people living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence in Africa as of the end of 2016, a third of the global total. This is despite the continent only accounting for 16 per cent of the world's population (Worldometers, World Population), see **Figure 3** below.

Figure 3: Displacements associated with conflicts in Africa, 2016



As **Figure 4** below shows, East Africa continues to host the highest number of IDPs, with 6.8 million or 54 per cent of the continent's total as of the end of 2016. The region has had the highest cumulative figures for seven of the last eight years, driven by protracted and cyclical conflicts in Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

Figure 4: New conflict displacements in 2016 and total number in millions of IDPs by region as of the end of 2016



Conflict displacement in Central Africa is escalating at such a rate, with more than 1.3 million new incidents between January and June 2017 that the region may well overtake East Africa as the worst-affected region both in terms of new displacements and long-term IDPs.

5.0 The challenge of forced migrants in Africa

Literature traces the beginning of the problem of forced migrants in Africa back to the period of struggles for independence. As Milner (2004) points out, “while migration, both forced and voluntary, has been a defining feature of African history since pre-modern times, the emergence of the modern refugee phenomenon in Africa may be linked to the struggle for and attainment of independence by most African states in the late 1950s and early 1960s”. The phenomenon of forced migration has characterized most African countries since the late pre-Independence period from the 1950s up until the 1980s. In many countries armed conflicts have characterized the post-Independence period and have been the main cause of population flights. Deng (1993) identifies civil and ethnic conflicts as the main causes of forced migrations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Many political analysts argue that most of these post-independence armed conflicts are a result of colonial legacy, the introduction of new socio-economic and political structures and the changing nature of the State (Kraler 2005). In many African countries, colonial regimes practised a system of differential and preferential treatment of Africans based on regional, tribal, status and ethnic differences. Most African countries inherited these colonial practices of division and exclusion (Anthony, 1999). Violent armed conflict experienced in several African countries in the post-Independence period are thus often the direct result of exclusionary policies pursued by newly independent regimes that in important ways can be seen as a continuation of similar colonial policies. The conflicts often opposed ruling groups trying to maintain the status quo on the one hand and excluded group rallying for change, on the other. Thus, in general, struggles over the control of political and economic power and concomitant massive human rights abuse, including widespread violence are the main cause of population flights in Sub Saharan Africa. Anthony (1999) cites Chad, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi,

and Uganda as examples of major refugee producing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, but the list can undoubtedly be prolonged.

Moreover, armed conflicts that cause population displacement are, in many instances, a result of failure or unwillingness of certain governments to resolve long-standing ethnic tensions (Chazan et al. 1999) or the tendency of certain governments to oppress particular population groups (Adepoju, 1989). For many socio-economic and developmental analysts armed conflicts and the resulting mass flight of refugees constitute the greatest challenge for economic development and the greatest obstacle to economic take off (Nabudere 2002).

6.0 Causes of forced migration

The root cause of forced migration is armed conflicts whose causes include poverty, civil strife, arms trade, violations of human rights and lack of accountability and democracy on the part of leaders (Rutinwa 1999). The 1994 Addis Ababa Declaration points out that armed conflicts and civil strife are the principal causes of refugees' flights in Africa. The document also mentions other factors which play a significant role in forced population displacement in Africa such as ethnic and religious intolerance, the abuse of human rights on a massive scale; the monopolization of political and economic power; refusal to respect democracy or the results of free and fair elections; resistance to popular participation in governance; and poor management of public affairs (Rutinwa 1999). External causes are also worth mentioning, such as arming and sponsoring rebel movements by external forces in order to have easy access to minerals and to find markets for their products, especially weapons; the unfair trade deals and unfair international economic system which leave many African states too poor to adequately attend to the needs of the citizens (Rutinwa 1999).

Forced migration is associated with the threat and/or fear that force people to flee their place of residence in search for security and safety (Deng 1993). Forced migrations are also divided into two categories depending on the causes of displacement.

In that respect, UNHCR considers it essential to interpret the notion of development in a broad and rights-based manner, rather than using it as a synonym for increased productivity, output and economic growth. It is precisely because they have not been able to realize their human rights and fundamental freedoms that so many people have felt obliged to seek protection outside their country of origin.

Bosson (2007) says forced migration may be caused by a single event such as military attack or a relocation/eviction order from the military or civil authorities for military, infrastructure or commercial purposes. Typically, these events affect whole villages or communities or sections of towns, and are relatively sudden.

More commonly forced migration is caused by a series of events, including coercive measures imposed by the authorities such as forced labour, land confiscation, extortion and forced agricultural practices. These measures, which constitute serious violations of human rights, typically act cumulatively over time, reducing the family's resource base, and thus its income, until the household economy collapses and leaving home becomes the best or only option.

This process first affects the poorer families, though the whole community may gradually migrate over a period of years. This pattern of 'gradual displacement', in which people tend to leave as individuals or as family groups, may be recognised in regions of current conflict. The coercive measures operate in, are affected by and exacerbate a situation of widespread poverty, rising inflation and declining real incomes. Thus, people leave home due to a combination of interconnecting coercive and economic factors. One has to consider the whole process leading to displacement rather than a single, immediate cause.

According to Kunz (1973), refugees are different from voluntary migrants in that they have to leave their homeland against their will, with no positive motivation to settle anywhere else. Olson (1979) points out that refugees differ from other migrants in that refugees are forced to leave their homes because of a change in their environment which makes it impossible to continue life as they have known it. They are coerced by an external force to leave their homes and go elsewhere.

In Kunz's theoretical framework forced migrants are not pulled out but rather they are pushed out of their homelands. However, in African migration reality the push-pull factor as conceived in Kunz's theoretical framework is not easily demarcated with regard to the distinction between economic migrants and refugees. As Ricca (1990) argues, in Africa the majority of migrants are forced into exile in one way or another.

7.0 Case studies in Africa

Figure 5: Children forced to migrate in DRC



(Africa report on internal displacement, December 2017 p15)

Fighting between government forces and armed opposition groups led to the widespread displacement of civilians in Africa in 2016. Renewed clashes between South Sudanese security forces and those loyal to the country's former vice-president in the capital of Juba led to the displacement of about 34,000 people in July. In Somalia, fighting between armed groups from displaced between 50,000 and 70,000 people in October. More than 100,000 people fled fighting between DRC's military and armed groups between August and December. In Mozambique, conflict between government forces and the armed wing of the Mozambican National Resistance displaced more 15,000 people during the year (IDMC, Internal Displacement Update, 2016). The scale of conflict displacement in 2016 suggests that the deliberate targeting of civilians was pervasive. In South Sudan 30,000 people fled their homes in September to escape deadly attacks against civilians and the looting of private property. In

CAR, 13 villages were burned in the same month, causing the displacement of about 3,500 people, and 48 civilians were killed and more than 20,000 displaced in two separate attacks on displacement camps in October. Inter-communal violence also triggered displacement across the continent. In September 2016, violence between different armed groups in CAR displaced 1,300 people, and violence between armed groups in DRC's Tanganyika province displaced 2,000. These tensions escalated toward the end of 2016, swelling Tanganyika's displaced population from 370,000 in December 2016 to 543,000 as of the end of March 2017 – the steepest rise in the country (OCHA, Democratic Republic of Congo: Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees, March 2017).

Fighting between government and opposition forces can degenerate into attacks against civilians and prompt or aggravate inter-communal violence. Fighting that erupted between DRC's military and the militia in 2016 has since transformed into inter-communal conflict between the region's different ethnic groups. New militias have emerged, and civilians have been actively targeted. It can be difficult to determine whether displacement is a direct or indirect consequence of violence, and whether it was intentional or not. These issues need to be better understood if conflict displacement is to be prevented or reduced. The Geneva Conventions were designed to limit it and other effects of war on civilians, but armed conflict results in displacement in a number of ways.

The mass displacement of civilians can be a deliberate military strategy, which is a violation of international humanitarian law, or people may flee the indirect effects of war such as general insecurity and the destruction of civilian infrastructure and services. Conflict persists at the global level, with countries reporting IDP figures over a period of 23 years on average, often involving multiple movements and severe humanitarian and protection consequences. This is particularly relevant to displacement in Africa, given that many of the country's conflicts are fought over years, if not decades. There is also a strong correlation between persistent numbers of IDPs and political crises. State fragility and weak governance often lead to intermittent conflict, insecurity and repeated displacement.

Conflict caused 70 per cent of new displacement in Africa in 2016, and 75 per cent in the first half of 2017. DRC, Nigeria and South Sudan have featured repeatedly among the five countries worst affected by conflict displacement in Africa. This reflects the enduring nature of their conflicts and the growing number of IDPs living in protracted displacement as a result (see **Figure 6**).

Figure 6: The five countries worst affected by conflict displacement, Jan – June 2017

Country	Displacement
DRC	997,000
Ethiopia	213,000
CAR	206,000
South Sudan	163,000
The Gambia	162,000

Central Africa remains the region most affected by conflict displacement, accounting for up to 60 per cent of the continent's new conflict displacements and DRC remains the worst affected country in the world, ahead of Iraq and Syria. There were 997,000 new conflict displacements in DRC by the end of June, more than for the whole of 2016. There were also 206,000 in CAR, four times the country's figure for 2016. The Gambia experienced a major spike in

displacement in January for the first time on record, the result of a constitutional crisis and military intervention following a disputed presidential election. More than 162,000 people were displaced internally and 48,000 fled to neighbouring countries, though people apparently returned relatively quickly once the crisis had abated.

8.0 On the radar: 2016/2017 figures and trends on conflict and forced migration in Africa

The published figures are already alarming, but they undoubtedly underestimate the scale of the phenomenon. More than 3.9 million new internal displacements in the context of conflict, violence were recorded in Africa in 2016. This is the equivalent of 10,500 people being forced from their homes every day, and represents an 8.5 per cent increase on the 3.5 million new displacements recorded in 2015. Displacement is a continent-wide phenomenon. At least 37 of Africa's 55 countries across every region were affected. More than 70 per cent of new displacements were the result of conflict and violence, a total of 2.8 million across 23 countries. This compares with a global figure of 22 per cent, which clearly highlights the disproportionate impact of conflict on the continent. Africa also accounted for about 40 per cent of this type of displacement globally.

Figure 7: Incidence of conflict displacements in Africa, 2009 to 2016

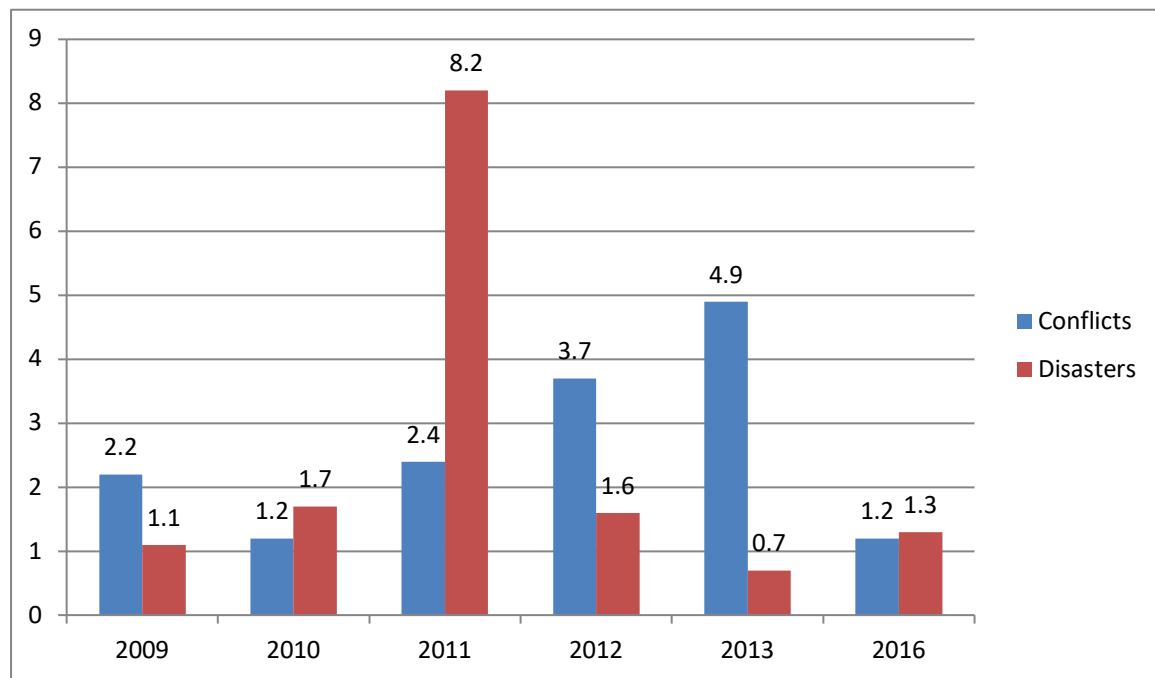
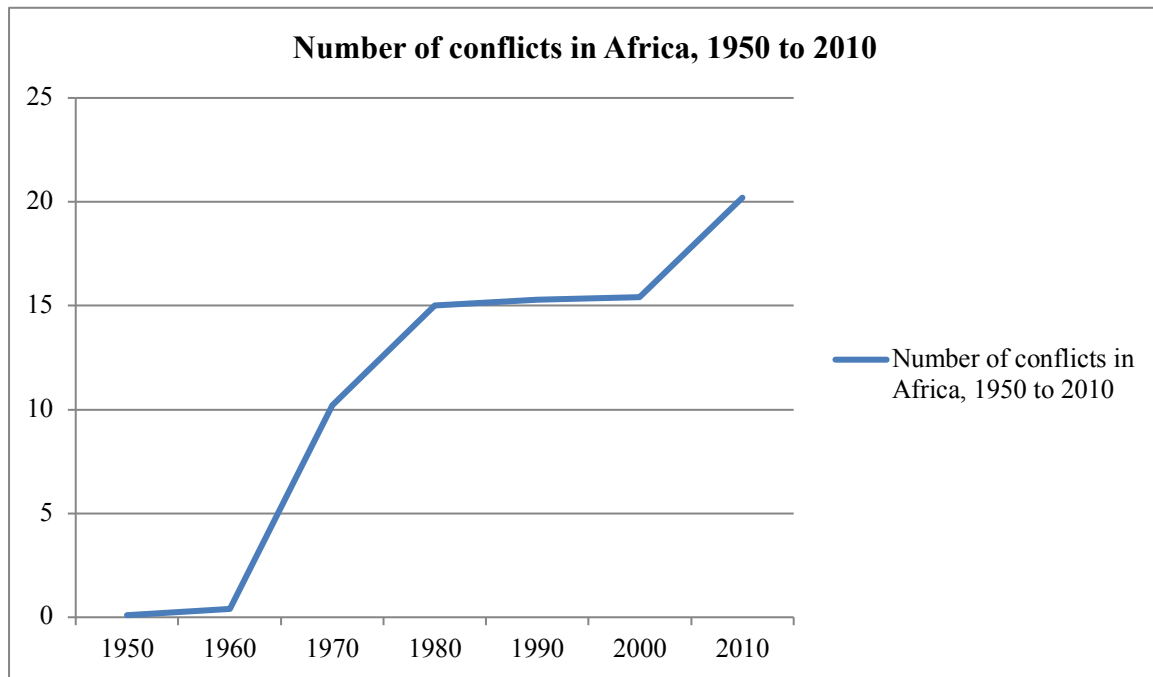


Figure 7 depicts, the high incidence of conflict displacement in 2016 is in keeping with the trend seen in previous years in Africa. New conflict displacements have significantly outnumbered those associated with disasters every year since 2009, except for 2010 and 2011. The scale of new conflict displacements in 2016 and 2017 highlights the disproportionate impact of violence in driving the phenomenon in Africa. Having declined significantly following the end of the Cold War and particularly between 2000 and 2005, the number of conflicts in Africa now fluctuates more regularly. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) indicate that incidents in Africa declined between 2010 and 2014, but have inclined again since 2015.

Figure 8: Number of armed conflicts in Africa, 1950 to 2016



The continent accounted for only 16 per cent of the global population in 2016, but more than a third of the world's conflict (see **Figure 8**).

A civil war that kills 2,500 people over the course of five years is estimated to increase the proportion of undernourished people in the population by more than three per cent, reduce life expectancy by around a year, increase infant mortality by about 10 per cent and raise the number of people without access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitary facilities by about two per cent. A single year of civil war is estimated to reduce a country's economic growth by about two per cent, while the doubling of per capita income in lower income countries would reduce the probability of conflict by an average of around 30 per cent (Peace Research Institute Oslo, *Peace on Earth? The Future of Internal Armed Conflict*, June 2014). A country that suffered major violence over 25 years has an average of 21 per cent more poverty than one that experienced relatively low levels of violence. The more intense the fighting, the longer the recovery time. Conflict in one country also has knock on effects in others. A country experiencing growth, such as Tanzania, loses about 0.7 per cent of its GDP for every neighbouring country in conflict.

9.0 The socio-economic and political impacts of forced migration in Africa

One of the main social problems today is the ever-increasing number of forced migrants on the continent and its negative impact on the social, economic, political and human development. As Cohen and Deng (1998) put it, "large numbers of persons are regularly turned into 'refugees' and forced into a life of destitution and indignity". Displacement is reversing current development gains and threatens the achievement of future development objectives in Africa. The figures produced by UNHCR in 2002 show that Africa produces and hosts 60% of the 17 million world's forced migrants. According to UNHCR (2005), the total population of concern to UNHCR, namely, refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless, and other people of concern, increased from 17 million persons at the end of 2003 to 19 million by the end of 2004. Africa has the biggest share of this number with nearly three million refugees, often concentrated in regions with considerably inadequate capacities to host them. The current points of concentration of refugees in Africa are the great lakes region which is home to nearly one and half million refugees, East and Horn of Africa which hosts an estimate of one million refugees and the West African block which hosts half a million refugees (UNHCR, 2005).

Today forced migrants flow from one African country to another in an uncontrolled manner. In some cases, the flow is too huge and fast to be adequately managed. For example, the influx of Rwandese refugees was at the rate of 250,000 forced migrants crossing into Tanzania within 24 hours and in two months the number of refugees fleeing from Rwanda to Tanzania rose to nearly a million people, with a further almost two million crossing to Zaire (Rutinwa 1999). These mass displacements of people constitute a serious threat of security. They also affect economic, environmental and political stability of the transit and final destination countries. In fact, countries which host a big number of forced migrants have complained of the latter's destruction of environment in terms of tree-cutting in search of fire wood, water pollution, deforestation for setting up camps (Mupedziswa 1993). These countries have also complained of spending considerable amounts of money over refugees which would have been used to improve the standard of living of their own citizens.

Moreover, the presence of forced migrants has caused unnecessary insecurity in the area of their settlement. The insecurity usually stems from the conflicts between refugees and local communities over the limited resources. More importantly, hosting forced migrants has been a source of political conflicts between the host country and their country of origin. For example, the presence of the Rwandan forced migrants in DRC after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda created a political conflict between the two countries until today.

10.0 Recommendations

Addressing and solving the problem of forced migrations in Africa requires a good analysis of its root causes so as to address them and prevent the problem before it occurs. To address these root causes requires a commitment of all stakeholders locally and globally. Some of the concrete measures to be taken include the democratization of African states in a manner that associates every citizen in the major decisions of public administration and governance. It also includes banning and criminalizing illegal sales of weapons. The major solution is also and primarily the sustainable development which eradicates extreme poverty provides basic infrastructures and improves people's standard of living.

Africa's decades-long displacement crisis demands a different approach if its scale and impact are to be reversed. What is needed, first and foremost, is a renewal of the political will and leadership that was demonstrated by African governments when they agreed to the Kampala Convention in 2009. This requires an acknowledgement of the scale of the issue, and its impact across the continent. National and international partners must work collectively across mandates and institutional barriers to deal more systematically with the root causes, long-term impacts and immediate consequences of forced migration. Sustained efforts are required of a wide range of organisations and institutions to address its causes and consequences.

A better understanding of the triggers of violence and drivers of conflict, and how these change over time, is also required. A stronger focus on prevention and reduction of the risk of new displacement requires tackling the drivers of conflict, taking early action on conflict prevention and emerging crises, and reducing the impact on civilians by improving respect for the laws of war. Moreover, national and local development actors from all key sectors need to take the lead from the start and stay fully engaged in protracted crises. UNHCR encourages the Global Forum to take due account of the way in which failed and flawed development processes give rise to situations in which people are forced to abandon their homes, to leave their own countries and to seek refuge in other states.

Dedicated policies to address the phenomenon, targeted support for forced migrants and their hosts, and a focus on helping them to achieve durable solutions would contribute to the achievement of development goals. In countries where significant numbers of IDPs live in

long-term displacement, progress toward many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will depend to a significant extent on being able to bring their plight to a definitive conclusion. Effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures can prevent and mitigate internal displacement, and reduce its duration and impact. They can also lessen people's vulnerability to repeated displacement, particularly during slow-onset crises, which are set to become more frequent and intense as a result of climate change.

Urgent attention is required to address the scale and impact of internal displacement in Africa in order to make progress on sustainable development. The SDGs and the 2063 roadmap on socioeconomic development, which the AU has put forward, are related to forced displacement in a number of important ways. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development declaration recognises that forced migrants/IDPs are amongst the world's most vulnerable people (UN, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda* 2015). To reach the "furthest behind first" and ensure that "no one is left behind", urgent efforts are required to slow the pace of new displacement, and reduce the persistently high numbers of people living uprooted lives across Africa. At the same time, truly sustainable development can only be achieved if forced displacement is addressed in an effective manner.

A number of SGD targets are of immediate relevance to forced migrants. For example, ensuring that all men and women "have access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property" is an essential step in IDP protection and reducing "exposure and vulnerability to climate related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters" would contribute to reducing the incidence and impact of disaster displacement (Goal 1 on reducing poverty). The SDG declaration acknowledges that internal displacement impedes development, and with it, African countries' ability to meet their SDG targets. Explicitly targeting IDPs in the AU's 2063 roadmap would help to overcome this challenge

Other recommendations to policymakers include:

- a. Policymakers should adopt an evidence-based approach to policy, building policy frameworks from research findings and not vice versa. In the long term such policies, developed on firm research foundations, will be more likely to result in successful outcomes.
- b. Development policymakers should seek to explicitly incorporate understanding of forced migration into already existing programmes focusing on migrant-led development
- c. The current attention paid to the potential impact of environmental forced migration is important. However, such attention should not be used to divert attention away from shrinking asylum space or other political protection failures. Nor should policy interest in environmental forced migration focus solely on the science or geography of climate change migration. Instead, policymakers should focus on the political dimensions by considering what types of reform of the global governance regime might adequately protect these groups of forced migrants.
- d. Fragile states are arguably the greatest policy challenge faced by the international community in relation to forced migration. However, policies addressing the relationship between fragile states and forced migration must not limit themselves to state strengthening or capacity-building programmes. A comprehensive approach must also consider the connections between state fragility and the behaviour of Northern states, particularly in terms of border securitisation discourses.
- e. To redress a historic neglect of refugees' own agency in the international community's approach to forced migration, policymakers must look to use forced migrants' own political and economic capacities, placing human mobility, autonomy and dignity at the centre of international programmes for relief, protection and reconstructions.

11.0 Conclusion

This presentation highlighted the magnitude of the phenomenon of forced migration on the African continent. It traced its historical evolution and its different manifestations, intensity and atrocity in time and space across the continent. The presentation highlighted the negative effect of the phenomenon of forced migration on socio-cultural, economic, ecological, demographic and political settings of the communities across the continent. It was also pointed out that the presence of a big number of forced migrants presents a security threat within the host country and between the countries concerned, namely the host country and the country of origin of the forced migrants. It was also highlighted that the increasing number of forced migrants instils a sentiment of fatigue on the part of host communities and countries in terms of accepting, receiving and protecting refugees. All these problems contribute negatively to the continent's effort towards sustainable development. It was observed that to address the forced migration problem requires a good analysis and response to the root causes of the problem which are economic and political in nature. The presentation proposed preventive measures and solutions which include the democratization and practice of good governance of Sub Saharan African regimes. The presentation emphasizes the importance of popular participation in the decision-making process as means to limit and/or avoid divisions and internal conflicts. Finally, but not least, external forces which take advantage of the conflicts to make blood money must be adequately addressed.

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